



Wizards First: The Muggle and Mudblood Crisis Reflecting the Rohingya Crisis

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Abstract

The *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling has been enjoying immense popularity since its inception. However, the series alongside its popularity has elicited various critiques, both positive and negative. On one hand the series has been hailed as promoting pluralism and teaching racial tolerance, and on the other hand it has been heavily criticised for endorsing racial and class discriminations. In fact, the discrimination and abuse endured by the Muggles (non-magic folks) and Muggle-borns (wizards or witches of Muggle descent) and the fanatic racial hatred perpetuated against them have been interpreted as an allegory for the anti-Semitism practiced in Germany under the Nazi regime. Critics have equated the Dark Lord with Hitler and the Death Eaters (the followers of Voldemort) with the Nazis. Following a similar trend of thought, the present paper will attempt to equate the Muggle and Mudblood crisis with the Rohingya crisis and thereby, establish the relevance of the series in the present time.

Keywords: *Harry Potter*, Discrimination, Rohingya, Wizards, Muggle.

Introduction

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone introduces the world to a brand new magical and enchanting universe. Nevertheless, as the series progresses the readers are gradually confronted with the various prejudices that plague the magical world, which also reflect the real-life issues and prejudices that are present in our society. Critics like Amy M. Green (2009) in her "Revealing Discrimination: Social Hierarchy and the Exclusion/Enslavement of the Other in the *Harry Potter* Novels" and Aisha Matthews (2018) in her "Magical Creatures and How to Exploit Them: A Postcolonial Reading of *Harry Potter* as a Representation of American Colonial History" have critiqued the cultural imperialism of the wizards and have compared it with the cultural hegemony and racial prejudices established and perpetuated by

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the colonisers. They have criticised the discrimination faced by various magical creatures in general and house-elves, giants and centaurs in particular. Both the critics have equated the condition of the house-elves to that of the African-Americans whose predecessors were brought as slaves to the American society by the settlers. However, unlike the African-Americans, who have been emancipated, the house-elves remain enslaved till date. They have also equated the condition of the giants and centaurs to that of the native Americans who were marginalised by the American settlers.

Apart from commenting on the bigotry against the magical creatures, many critics have dedicated major portions of their works to the critique of the biases and prejudices against the Muggles (people with no magical abilities or non-magic folks) and Muggle-born witches and wizards (witches and wizards whose biological parents are non-magic folks). For instance, Sophia Fransson (2015) in her *Using Selected Novels of Harry Potter as a Tool for Discrimination in the English as a Foreign Language Classroom with Postcolonial and Marxist Perspectives*, apart from examining the house-elf slavery and classism present in the *Harry Potter* texts, also focuses on the pure-blood mania of certain wizards. She examines the marginalisation of Muggles and Muggle-born witches and wizards by the pure-blood wizard community and relates it with the marginalisation of the colonised by the colonisers. The contempt of the pure-blood society for Muggles, Mudbloods and half-bloods, in the critic's opinion, can be seen as a representation of the racial prejudices that the White society harboured, rather, still harbours, against the non-White community and creoles. In a similar strain Tiffany Walters (2015) has examined the racial prejudices and ideologies present in the *Harry Potter* novels. *Not So Magical: Issues with Racism, Classism and Ideology in Harry Potter*, studies "the delineations of human and non-human beings, and how the institutional biases they struggle against are supported by traditional principles" (Walters, 2015, p. i). The study comments on the objectification of the house-elves and goblins and the oppression of other magical creatures like centaurs. In addition to all that, the study dedicates a considerable portion to the criticism of the discriminatory practices of the wizard kind against Muggles and Mudbloods - witches and wizards with Muggle parentage. The critic has compared the pure-blood obsession of Voldemort and his contempt for Muggles and Mudbloods with Hitler's obsession with racial purity of the Aryans and his disgust for Jews. She details how the assumed superiority of the pure-blood families is based on the flimsy notion of magic truly running in their blood. However, this theory is contradicted by the very existence of squibs – progenies of wizards or witches born without any magical abilities.

Walters (2015) notes that the “characters in *Harry Potter* who subscribe to racist ideologies back up their prejudices with the idea that race differentiations are based on genetic, or blood, composition, much as scientist in World War II Germany broadcasted supposed genetic differences to identify the Aryan race from those of Jewish descent, or those identified as being non-Aryan. Of course there are no firm genetic inequalities in either of these instances” (pp. 5-6) and therefore, in Germany scientists were either threatened or bribed to fabricate evidences supporting a racial hierarchy, and similarly, in the *Harry Potter* series, political and social manipulation and bullying have been adopted to uphold the ideas justifying racial hierarchy. The critic has listed several other similarities between the ways of the Nazis and Death Eaters including spreading propaganda against the target group and large-scale persecution of that group. She is of the opinion that much like Hitler, whose anti-Semitic campaign had a basis in personal hatred and grudge, Voldemort’s contempt for Muggles and Mudbloods, too is fueled by personal animosity and hatred for his father. Rather than the greater good of the Wizard kind, the grudge against his father, according to Walter, is the unconscious drive behind the Dark Lord’s anti-Muggle campaign. She further points out that brainwashing the followers, torturing and eliminating the opposition and marginalising and eradicating the undesired community have been the characteristic features of both Voldemort’s and Hitler’s political agenda (Walters, 2015). Apart from Walters, Victoria Bucknell too, in her *Cultural Identity in the Harry Potter Series*, amongst other things has critically commented on the similarities between Voldemort and Hitler and their contempt for particular communities. She has also attempted to equate Dumbledore with Churchill for “both were strong British leaders who were respected, but because of their alarmist views (Churchill tried to warn the world of the dangers posed by Hitler and Dumbledore tried to warn the wizarding world of Voldemort’s return), were shunned by the public” (Bucknell, n.d., pp. 50-51). Thus, the features linking Voldemort to Hitler, Death Eaters to Nazis and the hatred for ordinary non-magic people and Muggle-borns to anti-Semitism are widely discussed in the academic milieu. This paper is going to offer a fresh perspective on the social and political oppression and persecution of Muggles and Mudbloods by equating their crisis with the crisis faced by the Rohingyas in Myanmar, erstwhile Burma.

1. The Rohingyas: “The Most Persecuted Ethnic Group in the World”

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, a Buddhist majority country was colonised by the British in 1886. “The British filled many government positions with Indians who had migrated to Myanmar. A great influx of Indian migrants to Myanmar occurred, and Indian immigrants came to dominate major sectors of the economy, which caused tension between Burmese Buddhists and Indian immigrants” (Anwary, 2018, p. 91). After four decades of its

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independence, Burma was renamed Myanmar by the military government in 1989. The implementation of the Buddhist majority rule over the religious minority groups and the formation of a unitary state in 1962 by the military government marked the beginning of the marginalisation and institutionalised discrimination of the religious minorities. This escalated in 1982 with the implementation of the Citizenship Law of 1982 that repudiated the Rohingya community as one of the native tribes of Burma and hence, denied this ethnic community citizenship and rendered them stateless. This was followed by decades of military as well as mob violence resulting in genocide, which compelled the Rohingyas to flee Myanmar from time to time. However, it was the mass exodus of the Rohingyas in 2017, following the renewed ethnic cleansing carried out in Myanmar, that forced the international community to acknowledge the deliberate and systematic oppression and destruction of the Rohingya community in Myanmar as genocide. Later the UN declared that this particular ethnic community is the “most persecuted ethnic group in the world.” (Khin, 2017, p. 43)

2. Muggles, Mudbloods and Kalars: The Formula for Othering

Verbal abuse and name calling have been essential tools of objectifying and othering. The practice of using negative and derogatory expressions to refer to a community or a group of people of a particular race, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, or nationality, is not only an indicator of deep seated contempt and ideological biases, but is also a very potent measure of systematically ostracising the target group or groups and making them the Other, who should be looked down upon, who should be the subject of ridicule and disgust and the target of both verbal and physical abuse. The most common example of this practice is addressing an African or an African-American as a nigger, a derogatory term invented by the colonial masters to emphasise the primitive and bestial qualities and the dark complexion of the Africans and African-Americans. The term is effectively used to objectify them and render them as the Other and consequently, they become the target of oppression and violence.

In the *Harry Potter* series, the readers encounter two terms, namely Muggle and Mudblood, that are used to denote any ordinary person who does not possess any magical abilities and any witch or wizard who has non-magic parentage, respectively. The term Muggle, first introduced in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, exudes a slight malice and contempt that both the readers and the protagonist are able to sense from Hagrid's expression without, yet, being aware of its meaning: “Hagrid grunted. ‘I'd like ter see a great Muggle like you stop him,’ he said.” (Rowling, 1997/2014, p. 57). He later clarifies, upon Harry's enquiring, that Muggle is a term used to refer to people with no magical abilities: “‘A what?’ said Harry interested. ‘A Muggle,’ said Hagrid. ‘It's what we call non-magic folk like them....’” (Rowling, 1997/2014, p. 57). Thus, the term emphasises a lack, which has been used both as an excuse for branding a category of people inferior and to assert the superiority of those who do not identify with it (the lack). However, the contempt embedded in the word Muggle is considerably subtle in comparison to the utter disgust and prejudice connoted by the term Mudblood. It is a pejorative term used to address those of Muggle descent. The term Mudblood means ‘dirty blood’ and the sheer amount of disgust and contempt expressed by it is felt in the body language of Draco Malfoy when he calls Hermione Mudblood: “‘No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood,’ he spat.” (Rowling, 1998/2014, p. 117).

Martha C. Nussbaum is of the opinion that attributing “dirty-ness, or disgust, from one group to another is part of group denigration” (Walters, 2015, p. 16) that places one group above the other: “Disgust, as psychological research emphasizes, is full of irrational [...] thinking. It is no surprise that ideas of contamination are ubiquitous in racism and other types of group subordination.” (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 33). The expression Mudblood is a signifier that signifies centuries of prejudices and the marginalisation of a class of people by another:

‘Malfoy called Hermione something. It must’ve been really bad, because everyone went mad.’

‘It was bad,’ said Ron ‘Malfoy called her “Mudblood”, Hagrid -’

‘He didn’t!’ he growled at Hermione.

‘He did,’ she said. ‘But I don’t know what it means. I could tell it was really rude, of course...’

‘It’s about the most insulting thing he could think of,’ gasped Ron, coming back up.

‘Mudblood’s a really foul name for someone who was Muggle-born – you know, non-magic parents. There are some wizards - like Malfoy’s family - who think they’re better than everyone else because they’re what people call pure-blood.’ (Rowling, 1998/2014, p. 121)

By denoting someone as Muggle or Mudblood, the wizarding community reproduces them as the Other. This othering of Muggles and Muggle-born witches and wizards allow the pure-blood wizarding community to disenfranchise them and to push them to the margins of the magical society. This also enables the pure-blood community to exploit and torture them without qualms. It is this othering implied by the term Mudblood that licenses Draco to eagerly wish for the brutal death of one of his classmates without any scruple: “... last time the Chamber of Secrets was opened, a Mudblood *died*. So I bet it’s only a matter of time before one of them’s killed this time ... I hope it’s Granger,’ he said with relish.” (Rowling, 1998/2014, p. 237) Similarly, in the final novel of the series, we find that Yaxley sternly states that the children of Muggles do not evoke the sympathy of the pure-blood wizarding community: “‘Spare us’, spat Yaxley. ‘The brats of Mudbloods do not stir our sympathies.’” (Rowling, 2007/2010, p. 213) Thus, the terms Muggle and Mudblood absolve the subjective position of their addressees and turn them into objects and thereby, targets of discriminatory policies, contempt, abuse and violence.

Just as in the Potterverse, the terms Muggle and Mudblood are used to degrade certain groups of people, in Myanmar, those belonging from the Rohingya community are addressed as *kalars*, a derogatory term used to stress their dark skin tone and to alienate them from the other ethnic communities residing in the country: “They call us *kalars*, a pejorative term expressing scorn and disgust for dark-skinned ethnic groups. In a different time and place, under different circumstances, *kalar* would have meant wog or nigger. The word is like a slap in the face; it undermines us more with each passing day.” (Habiburahman & Ansel, 2018/2019, n.p) By reducing the existence and identity of the Rohingya community to a term, to their complexion, the state effectively objectifies them and brands them as the Other, the subject of abuse and ridicule. Thus, the act of confining the identity of a certain community to a particular lack or to a characteristic feature of that community absolves the rest of the

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ethical burden of oppressing someone of their own species. Hence, reducing an ordinary person to a Muggle, a Muggle-born wizard or witch to a Mudblood, a Rohingya to a kalar are potent measures of othering that aid the rest of the population to direct their hatred and abuse towards these communities.

3. Propaganda

Spreading biases and circulating misleading information against a particular community, race, gender etc. to promote certain social and political views have always been major instruments of othering and directing hatred and contempt towards the target group. In the Potterverse, propaganda targeting the Muggles and Mudbloods to promote pure-blood superiority has been extensively prevalent. Barratt (2012) in *The Politics of Harry Potter* has correctly pointed out that “propaganda can be an extremely powerful tool in shaping public opinion, and doing so is crucial if a leader bases his legitimacy on doing the well of the people” (p.68). Hence, Voldemort’s legitimacy, that is based on preserving and safeguarding the pure-blood society, is dependent upon his anti-Muggle propaganda. Amongst many instances present in the series, two of the most striking examples of anti-Muggle propaganda and institutional biases are the Magic is Might statue and the pamphlet titled “*MUDBLOODS: and the Dangers They Pose to a Peaceful Pure-Blood Society*” (Rowling, 2007/2010, p. 205). The Magic is Might statue within the Ministry of Magic depicts a wizard and a witch sitting on Muggles:

It was rather frightening, this vast sculpture of a witch and a wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones, looking down at the Ministry workers Engraved in foot-high letters at the base of the statue were the words: MAGIC IS MIGHT....

Harry looked more closely and realised that what he had thought were decoratively carved thrones were actually mounds of carved humans: hundreds and hundreds of naked bodies, men, women and children, all with rather stupid, ugly faces, twisted and pressed together to support the weight of the handsomely robed wizards.

‘Muggles,’ whispered Hermione. ‘In their rightful place....’ (Rowling, 2007/2010, p. 199)

The pamphlet, apart from its highly biased and misleading title, also features an image of “a red rose, with a simpering face in the middle of its petals, being strangled by a green weed with fangs and a scowl” (Rowling, 2007/2010, p. 205) clearly giving out the message that the inferior weeds, the outsiders, the Mudbloods, are the parasites strangling the great and innocent rose, the pure-bloods.

Thus, the Muggle-borns are the threats, the parasites that need to be uprooted, to be exterminated. Both the statue and the pamphlet, displaying the Ministry of Magic’s endorsement of the anti-Muggle propaganda, are prime examples of the endorsement of propaganda against a particular community by the state.

The Ministry’s validation of the anti-Muggle campaign is reminiscent of the prejudices propagated against the Rohingya community by the state of Myanmar, erstwhile

Burma. The state absolved the Rohingyas of their history, a history that indicated that numerous members of this community had inhabited Arakan state even before the colonisation of Myanmar by the British imperial forces, by refusing to acknowledge them as one of the native tribes or ethnic groups indigenous to Myanmar. The state portrayed them as the outsider, stealing the resources of the land on which they had no claim and hence, depriving the natives of the land of their rightful share of resources:

... to retain Burmese citizenship, you must belong to one of the recognised ethnic groups, which form part of eight ‘national races’. The Rohingya are not among them. With a stroke of the pen, our ethnic group officially disappears. The announcement falls like a thunderbolt on more than a million Rohingya who live in Arakan State, our ancestral land in western Burma. The brainwashing starts. Rumours and alarm spread insidiously from village to village. From now on, the word ‘Rohingya’ is prohibited. It no longer exists. We no longer exist.

I am three years old and am effectively erased from existence. I become a foreigner to my neighbours: they believe that we are Bengali invaders who have entered their country illegally and now threaten to overrun it. (Habiburahman & Ansel, 2018/2019, n.p.)

This idea of Rohingyas being illegal immigrants, exploiting the resources of Myanmar, gained much precedence with the other communities, especially the majority Buddhist community, residing in the country and this made the Rohingyas not only the subject of institutionalised discrimination and oppression, but also of mob violence and abuse. Thus, in both the cases racial and social prejudices and the violence inflicted by the state have been justified and perpetuated through propaganda.

4. Ostracisation and Persecution of Muggle-Borns and Rohingyas

The height of victimisation and othering manifests in the form of denying the target groups citizenship and thereby, civic and human rights. In the final novel of the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, “the question of how Muggle-borns” have obtained magical powers are being circulated, and those witches and wizards who fail to “provide evidence of magical lineage” are “forcefully separated from families and wizarding society” (Walters, 2015, pp.19-20). It has been “theorized that Muggle-borns might have tricked a wizard” or a witch “into gifting them with their abilities because” they cannot grasp or rather, they refuse to acknowledge that “a person without magical parents” can be “as magically proficient as a pure-blood.” (Walters, 2015, p.20) A *Muggle-born Register* is invented by the Ministry of Magic to register and investigate the lineage of Muggle-borns. It becomes compulsory for them to register themselves and then appear for an interview before the *Muggle-born Registration Commission*:

‘Muggle-born Register’, she read aloud. ‘The Ministry of Magic’ is undertaking a survey of so-called ‘Muggle-borns’, the better to understand how they came to possess magical secrets.

‘Recent research undertaken by the Department of Mysteries reveals that magic can only be passed from person to person when wizards reproduce. Where no

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proven wizarding ancestry exists, therefore, the so-called Muggle-born is likely to have obtained magical power by theft or force.

The Ministry is determined to root out such usurpers of magical power, and to this end has issued an invitation to every so-called Muggle-born to present themselves for interview by the newly appointed Muggle-born Registration Commission. (Rowling, 2007/2010, p. 172)

Those Muggle-borns who fail to provide any evidence of “*wizarding ancestry*” are forced to give up their wands and are banished from the wizarding world on the premise that they are not the natural inhabitants of the magical world because they do not have any trace of magical blood in them:

‘A wand was taken from you upon your arrival at the Ministry today, Mrs. Cattermole,’ Umbridge was saying....

‘Could you please tell us from which witch or wizard you took that wand?’

‘T -took?’ sobbed Mrs. Cattermole. ‘I didn’t t – take it from anybody. I b - bought it when I was eleven years old. It – it- it – *chose me.*’...

‘No,’ said Umbridge, ‘no, I don’t think so, Mrs. Cattermole. Wands only choose witches or wizards. You are not a witch....’ (Rowling, 2007/2010, p. 214)

The witches and wizards of non-magical lineage are often taken away by the Dementors and are detained in the Azkaban prison and those who resist arrest or challenge the verdict issued by the Ministry are subject to the Dementor’s kiss:

‘No, no, I’m half-blood, I’m half-blood, I tell you! ...’

‘This is your final warning,’ said Umbridge’s soft voice, magically magnified so that it sounded clearly over the man’s desperate screams. ‘If you struggle, you will be subjected to the Dementor’s kiss.’

The man’s screams subsided, but dry sobs echoed through the corridor.

‘Take him away,’ said Umbridge.

Two Dementors appeared in the doorway of the courtroom, their rotting, scabbed hands clutching the upper arms of a wizard who appeared to be fainting. They glided away down the corridor with him and the darkness they trailed behind them swallowed him from sight. (Rowling, 2007/2010, p. 212)

Dementors are foul, dark creatures that suck away all hope and happiness from a person and the Dementor’s kiss is a ritual in which a Dementor sucks out the soul of a person. It is supposed to be one of the most horrible rituals known to the wizarding community and only extremely dangerous criminals, convicted for committing heinous crimes, were previously subjected to the Dementor’s kiss (Rowling, 1999/2014). The subjection of the Muggle-borns to the Dementor’s kiss is a clear reflection of their deliberate persecution and the torture they are compelled to endure due to the discriminatory policies of the state.

The very act of not recognising Muggle-born witches and wizards as a part of the wizarding society and denying them the right to possess wands can be interpreted as

reflecting the Myanmar government's decision to deny the Rohingya community citizenship on the ground that they are not one of the ethnic communities indigenous to Myanmar: "Full citizenship is restricted to nationals of specific ethnic groups who settled in Burma prior to 1823. Burma does not consider the Rohingya to be a national ethnic group. The Rohingya are therefore excluded from full citizenship." (Khin, 2017, p. 47) Much like the provision that is introduced by the Ministry of Magic, which allows the Muggle-borns to retain their wands and to remain in the wizarding society if they can present proof of their magical lineage before the Ministry, the 1982 Citizenship Law "allowed Rohingyas to apply for citizenship if they could speak one of Myanmar's official languages" in addition to providing "evidence that their families had lived in Myanmar" before its independence in 1948 (Anwary, 2018, p. 93). Many Muggle-borns claim that they are descendants of wizards or witches, but fail to provide concrete proof and thus, are ostracised from the wizarding society (Rowling, 2007/2010). Similarly, several "Rohingyas claimed that their predecessors had migrated to Myanmar during Arakan monarchy and during British rule. However, most Rohingyas failed to provide evidence" and lost their citizenship (Anwary, 2018, p. 93). Also, like the Mudbloods in the *Harry Potter* universe, the Rohingyas were and still are largely persecuted in Myanmar. They were arbitrarily arrested, tortured, denied basic amenities and were forced to flee the country:

... arbitrary taxation on a wide range of activities, including even the death of cattle; forced labour, land confiscation, arbitrary arrests and extortion for releasing the person arrested; almost no provision of government services such as health, education or infrastructure in Rohingya areas.... The repressive 1982 Citizenship Law effectively denies many Rohingya citizenship and underpins legal discrimination against the Rohingya. It means the Rohingya are denied access to education and employment, and face unacceptable restrictions on movement, marriage, and reproduction. (Khin, 2017, pp. 46-47)

5. Ethnic Cleansing

Ethnic cleansing refers to the systematic and forceful removal of certain ethnic groups from a given region by the ethnic community in power, which most often than not, is the majority ethnic community, in order to achieve ethnic homogeneity. Methods implemented to achieve ethnic homogeneity range from expulsion, deportation, rape, torture and abuse to genocide. It is in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* that readers first encounter the vicious act of ethnic cleansing of Muggle-borns and they also learn that this has happened in the past as well:

THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED, ENEMIES OF THE HEIR BEWARE.... 'Enemies of the heir, beware! You'll be next, Mudbloods!' ... 'You all know, of course, that Hogwarts was founded over a thousand years ago Slytherin wished to be more *selective* about the students admitted to Hogwarts. He believed that magical learning should be kept within all-magic families. He disliked taking students of Muggle parentage, believing them to be untrustworthy.... Slytherin had built a hidden chamber in the castle, of which the other founders knew nothing.... None would be able to open it until his own true heir arrived at the school. The heir alone

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would be able to unseal the Chamber of Secrets, unleash the horror within, and use it to purge the school of all who were unworthy to study magic.’ ... ‘And father won’t tell me *anything* about the last time the Chamber was opened, either. Of course, it was fifty years ago...’ (Rowling, 1998/2014, pp. 146-236).

In the past, the attempt to eliminate the Mudbloods from Hogwarts led to the petrification of Muggle-born students and it culminated in the death of a Muggle-born witch. Though death is avoided this time, the petrification of Muggle-born pupils, with the view to purge Hogwarts of them, has been rampant (Rowling, 1998/2014). Renewed atrocities and violence on the Muggles and Muggle-borns begin with the return of the Dark Lord (Rowling, 2000/2014). The subsequent novels in the series record several instances of murder, torture and large-scale destruction of Muggle property by Voldemort and the Death Eaters:

‘... The Brockdale bridge ... the Boes and Vance murders ... not to mention the ruckus in the West Country ...’

‘You – er – mean to say, some of your people were – were involved in those – those things, were they?’ ...

‘Of course they were,’ he said....

‘He Who Must Not Be Named has now been joined by those of his followers who broke out of Azkaban in January,’ said Fudge ‘Since they have moved into the open, they have been wreaking havoc. The Brockdale bridge – he did it, Prime Minister, he threatened a mass Muggle killing unless I stood aside for him and –’....

‘So I suppose you’re going to tell me he caused the hurricane in the West Country, too?’ said the Prime Minister

‘It was the Death Eaters,’ said Fudge. (Rowling, 2005/2014, pp. 4-11)

And the final novel of the series notes the heightened torture, abuse, murder and deportation of the Mudbloods: “‘Meanwhile, the Ministry has started moving against Muggle-borns.’ ... unless you are now deemed to have obtained your magical power illegally and must suffer the punishment.” (Rowling, 2007/2010, pp. 172-73)

The massive persecution, deportation and obliteration of Muggles and Muggle-borns in the *Harry Potter* universe elicit a comparison with the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingyas in Myanmar. Voldemort’s campaign to exterminate the Muggles and Muggle-born witches and wizards is similar to U Ne Win’s project of denying the Rohingyas citizenship and the subsequent displacement of the Rohingyas from their native place: “The dictator U Ne Win has presided over a reign of terror in Burma for decades.... He is planning to redefine national identity and fabricate an enemy to fuel fear... to retain Burmese citizenship, you must belong to one of the recognised ethnic groups, which form part of eight ‘national races’. The Rohingya are not among them. With a stroke of the pen, our ethnic group officially disappears.” (Habiburahman & Ansel, 2018/2019, n.p) The ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas, much like the annihilation of the Muggles and Mudbloods in the wizarding world, was carried out in several phases over the decades since 1980s:

Since the military took power in Burma in 1962, they have gradually increased

repression against the Rohingya... In 2012 rising tension led to the first large scale attacks on Rohingya villages, with tens of thousands of Rohingya forced to flee their home villages as local Rakhine nationalist mobs attacked them. (Khin, 2017, pp. 43-44)

The latest instances of abuse, expulsion and mass killings of Rohingyas were reported in 2017:

The latest crisis began on August 25, 2017 Areas of northern Rakhine State, where most Rohingya live, were being systematically cleared. Homes were destroyed and soldiers returned the next day to burn and demolish anything left standing. Food stores were stolen or destroyed, livestock taken. They were ensuring that there was nothing left for people to return to. Within a week of the offensive beginning, more than 200,000 people were fleeing, making the dangerous trek to Bangladesh with only what they had on them when they were forced to run for their lives. (Khin, 2017, pp. 46-47)

Thus, institutionalised violence, mass murder, destruction of property and forced migration are measures that have been adopted to achieve ethnic homogeneity in both the cases.

Conclusion

The *Harry Potter* series features, among other instances of socio-political conflict, the campaign for racial purification and the threat of establishing a homogeneous society. The comparison of the pure-blood mania of the Death Eaters to the obsession of the Nazi party with the racial purity of the Aryans, by several critics, has opened new avenues in the critical study of *Harry Potter*. The paper by equating the persecution and elimination of the Muggles and Muggle-born witches and wizards with a recent political crisis and turbulence, namely the Rohingya crisis, establishes the relevance of the series in the present day and also enriches the gamut of *Harry Potter* critical studies.

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Bio-note

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